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Trick or Treat SHOTEX: Trick First. Treat Later.

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{NO COMMENTS}

Naval Medical Center Portsmouth beneficiaries "trick or treat" during the hospital's influenza immunization exercsise, Oct. 28.

By Rebecca Perron, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth Public Affairs

There were tricks and there were treats at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Va., the evening of Friday, Oct. 28.

For the last 10 years, NMCP has invited the children of staff and patients to trick or treat in the medical center during the Harvest Festival, offering tables full of candy and activities set up at every outpatient clinic. This year, the First Class Petty Officers Association also set up a haunted house in the base gym.

Those, obviously, are the treats.

The parents like to get the "trick" part out of the way first. This was the 11th year the Immunization Clinic held a "shot clinic" specifically to administer the flu vaccine to any TRICARE beneficiary. But really, the goal is to get school-aged kids to the hospital for a fun activity in conjunction with getting them immunized before the flu season gets into full swing.

This year, 82 TRICARE beneficiaries – children and adults – received their vaccine.

Cmdr. Lana Rowell, an NMCP anesthesiologist, brought her 6-year-old son, Bennett, to the clinic to get his flu vaccine before he collected some candy. Rowell said this was the second year she brought Bennett to the festival, but it was the first time they got in on the vaccine clinic.

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Six-year old Bennet Rowell, son of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth anesthesiologist Cmdr. Lana Rowell, sits patiently in costume while waiting to receive his Flumist vaccine at the hospital's Halloween influenza exercise (SHOTEX) Oct. 28.

Bennett , in costume, sat in the waiting room patiently waiting his turn. As his name was called and they walked to the exam room, he told his mother he didn't want to get a shot. She comforted him by telling him it wasn't a shot, and that it wouldn't hurt.

Bennett and many others received the Flumist. The Flumist is a nasal spray that is inhaled by the recipient through each nostril and is painless. The Flumist is offered to patients age 2 to 49. The traditional shot is given to children age 6 months to 2 years, adults 50 years and older, pregnant women and patients with chronic medical conditions.

As a reminder, the area's branch health clinics have enough vaccines for every age group, and we encourage everyone who has not received their vaccine to get one by mid-November. It takes about two weeks for the full effects of the vaccine to kick in, and flu season typically begins at Thanksgiving, brought on by the beginning of the holiday travel season.

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